

SOUTH AFRICA

OUT OF THE

COMMONWEALTH

-WHAT NOW?

South Africa is out of the Commonwealth. This is not only a great defeat for Verwoerd, but a corresponding victory for the opponents of apartheid—and for the non-white peoples of South Africa who called for his exclusion.

But the victory at Lancaster House does not by itself constitute a positive move to end apartheid. Verwoerd's withdrawal from the Commonwealth in March, rather than concede a single inch of his apartheid policy, proves instead the futility of "moral" pressures and "moral" victories against the Nationalists, unless they are backed up by action. The importance of exclusion to the South African Government lies in the practical benefits they stand to lose; the importance to us lies in the opportunity it offers us to press ahead with the complete political and economic isolation of the present rulers in the Union—which alone can help end apartheid.

If the South Africans are able to retain the practical benefits of Commonwealth membership, or if we fail to snatch at this opportunity further to isolate the Nationalists, the victory will prove meaningless. According to the *Financial Times* (April 13th, 1961) "its understanding with Britain is now very obviously the keystone of the Union's future."

NO ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

The Commonwealth's Own Future

The whole point of excluding South Africa was to save the Commonwealth from almost certain disruption; and to bind it more closely on the basis of the assertion of a common human value. If the Union is to retain some of the more substantial benefits of association, the "common idealism" of which Mr. Macmillan spoke will seem hollow indeed.

South Africa, for instance, sells sugar. So do the West Indies and Australia. Commonwealth arrangements allow South African sugar into the British market at a protected price. If this protection is allowed to continue, the West Indies and Australia will be reduced to the same position as a non-member of the Commonwealth. This will be a slight to them; perhaps a discouragement to other countries considering joining the Commonwealth; and certainly a rebuff to those Commonwealth Prime Ministers who refused to compromise in March.

What Was the Value of Her Commonwealth Membership to South Africa ?

1. **TRADE PREFERENCES:** "Something like one-third of the Union's total merchandise exports are exports to this country protected by preferences" said *The Times* in an editorial a few days after Dr. Verwoerd's withdrawal decision.

The most vulnerable of these are agricultural products, for which the U.K. is the biggest single market. Of a total of £163 m. exported last year, Britain took £63.5 m. and about half benefited from preferences (*Financial Times*). These products included maize, sugar, wine and fruit. Some of the preference is determined by bilateral agreement, sanctioned by GATT (General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade); other preferences are given informally by Britain to Commonwealth goods of a certain kind (for which South Africa gives no *quid pro quo*) In terms of the Commonwealth Sugar Agreement, the Union enjoys a tariff margin of 5s. 4d. per cwt. and a guaranteed market for 158,000 tons this year, at £45 a ton against a current free price below £27 a ton.

The preferences certain Union merchandise have had in the British market are of long standing, and were endorsed under the Ottawa Agreement. This agreement recognised Commonwealth preferences, but left each Commonwealth country to sign bilateral agreements with each of the others. The General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade does not prohibit the continuation of such bilateral agreements as exist, because it allows countries to give preferences where these have been in existence, for whatever reason they may have been given.

For GATT, the simple fact that there had been preferences is reason enough to continue them.

A lesser benefit to the Union was her exemption as a Commonwealth country

from UK import quotas, but this too was determined by bilateral agreement.

2. **CITIZENSHIP**: In practice, Commonwealth citizenship entitled South Africans to all the privileges of a British subject—a South African could enter most Commonwealth countries and stay as long as he liked—and to those of a British citizen if he chose. He could live, work and vote in the United Kingdom.

3. **SPECIAL FACILITIES**: Britain has given South Africa a number of facilities by virtue of the special relationship between the two countries fostered by the Commonwealth. These include the supply of technical, military and diplomatic information; and training opportunities in the UK for military and other personnel.

4. Britain and other Commonwealth countries have acted as a kind of buffer between South Africa and the full weight of world opinion. There is little doubt that South Africa's Commonwealth membership has inhibited some countries from taking positive steps against the South African government. And at the United Nations the abstentions of Great Britain and Australia on motions critical of apartheid and of the administration of the South West Africa mandate have undoubtedly weakened their effect.

Effect of South Africa's Exclusion

1. **ECONOMIC**: It is for fear of losing the extensive economic benefits of Commonwealth membership that South African commercial interests have greeted the Union's exclusion with such dismay. The loss of trade preferences could exert considerable strain on her economy at a time when the international boycott is still spreading (Nigeria, Soviet Union, China and British Guiana have lately joined Ghana, Sudan, India and Ethiopia and other countries officially boycotting South African trade). "... even the most optimistic of Union supporters now concede that within a short time the country's only customers in Africa will be the Rhodesian Federation (a narrowing market as its own industries expand), Angola and Mozambique, both of which are small." (Johannesburg correspondent *Financial Times*, April 13th, 1961).

According to the S. A. Reserve Bank, exports "fell sharply" in the second half of 1960. International confidence in South Africa has been further shaken by her isolation, the drain on foreign reserves continues unabated (by April, 1961, reserves had dropped by nearly 40% since January, 1960) and the value of gold shares has dropped disastrously.

It is also significant that a very large proportion of the goods affected by Commonwealth preferences are farm produce. Any curtailment of these exports "would have grave political implications, because the backbone of the Nationalist Party is the farming vote, and it is doubtful if Dr. Verwoerd would retain the support of men whose pockets are emptied in pursuance of his policies". (Johannesburg correspondent, *Financial Times*, April 13th, 1961).

2. **POLITICAL**: The loss of the "protection" of Commonwealth members on international platforms will lay South Africa open to the full effects of world condemnation. According to the *Observer's* correspondent (9th April, 1961), "Never has Dr. Verwoerd's government been so shaken as it was when the news came through" that the UK delegation to the UN was to vote, for the first time, in favour of a motion condemning apartheid.

SOUTH WEST AFRICA.—This nakedness to world censure is particularly important for South West Africa, the Union's Achilles Heel. Following the approach to the Commonwealth from the UN in March, to use its influence to persuade South Africa to change its policy in South West Africa, a new resolution has been passed since the Commonwealth admitted its inability to exert such pressure effectively—calling for freedom for the territory, and asking the UN to take action, if necessary without the co-operation of the South African government. Britain again abstained on this resolution, together with Australia, France, Belgium and Portugal.

THE HIGH COMMISSION TERRITORIES.—The problem of the three High Commission territories is posed acutely in the new situation. Economically undeveloped and largely dependent on the Union for employment, their citizens are

unconditionally opposed to any form of incorporation in the Union. Yet Verwoerd is known to desire incorporation; and it is well within his power to prohibit or limit immigration and literally starve British Protected peoples. Already the new Rands and cents of South African currency are being introduced in the Protectorates, painfully stressing the economic link. Meanwhile, the UK High Commissioner in South Africa combines the roles of diplomatic representative in South Africa and administrator of the High Commission territories.

WHAT NOW ?

1. Britain must end all preferences to South Africa and make her exclusion complete and effective.
2. She must cease supplying technical, diplomatic and military information, and refuse military training facilities. South Africa must receive no arms from this country. Her Defence Forces are openly admitted to be organized not to meet any external aggression, but to deal with internal "subversion".
3. Britain must be pressed to refuse her support to South Africa on all international platforms—the abstention on South West Africa must not be repeated.
4. All sporting and cultural benefits of Commonwealth membership must now end for South Africa while apartheid continues.
5. Political refugees in the High Commission territories and elsewhere should readily receive political asylum or Commonwealth citizenship should they ask for it.

The Standstill Bill

For the moment, relations between Britain and South Africa are being frozen by a "standstill" bill in the Commons, valid for one year. The long postponement gives reason to suspect that the Government wants to avoid the only acceptable decision. Britain's actions must not be permitted to speak softer than her words, and it is a matter of the greatest urgency that political and religious organisations, trade unions and individuals should exert every pressure on the Government to see that all Commonwealth privileges for South Africa come to an end.

WHAT YOU CAN DO :

Exert pressure on the Government by demanding through your trade union, political party or any other organisation.—

1. **No bilateral trade agreements with Verwoerd**
2. **NO ARMS TO VERWOERD**
3. **No British votes for South Africa at the UN**
4. **Industrial and political development for the High Commission Territories**
5. **Withdraw the Mandate over South West Africa**
6. **BOYCOTT SOUTH AFRICAN GOODS**

This pamphlet is published by the Anti-Apartheid Movement which is a non-party, non-denominational organisation of people in Britain who not only detest apartheid, but wish to do something to end it.

As the Boycott Movement it ran the intensified boycott of South African goods in March, 1960, and in 1961 it ran a campaign for British pressure to exclude South Africa from the Commonwealth, Affiliated committees exist in many centres throughout the country, and anyone wishing to assist our present campaign should get in touch with us at: Anti-Apartheid Movement, c/o 15 Endsleigh Street, London, W.C.1